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S/WCI FOR SAM MUBANGO AND CATHY HARMS  
EUR/PGI FOR ALAIN NORMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2017  
TAGS: [KAWC](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [FI](#)  
SUBJECT: FINLAND: RESPONSE TO GUANTANAMO RESETTLEMENT  
REQUEST

REF: A. SECSTATE 37005

[1](#)B. MUBANGU-THOME EMAIL 25 MARCH 2007

Classified By: POLOFF DAVID SCHLAEFER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an Action Request; please see paragraph  
[1](#)6.

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff spoke with Finnish officials in the MFA's Political Secretariat and Office for Human Rights about the possibility of resettling Guantanamo detainees in Finland. Finland has previously rejected several US requests to resettle detainees, including twice rejecting the resettlement in Finland of Uighers. The GoF's previous rejections were explained by legal and policy guidelines requiring any refugee resettlement request to be made via a formal UNHCR referral; in the absence of an official UNHCR referral, the GoF would not consider the case. Although a theoretical mechanism exists for extraordinary referrals, it has never been used and no precedent exists. There was also a palpable lack of enthusiasm among GoF officials for resettling Guantanamo detainees inside Finland.

[1](#)3. (C) Finland might reconsider its position in light of recent developments. Johanna Suurpaa, the MFA's Director for Human Rights, said that the GoF was encouraged by recent statements by senior American officials that the USG wished to close Guantanamo as soon as possible. She pointed to Secretary Gates' remarks as having been particularly well received by Finnish FM Tuomioja. Suurpaa said that the GoF had long urged the US to close Guantanamo, and now that US policy was moving in this direction, an opportunity might exist for Finland to use its "extraordinary referral" mechanism (absent an UNHCR request) for the first time. However, problems still existed regarding the suitability of many nationalities for resettlement in Finland given the country's relatively small, homogeneous population and unique Nordic climate; for example, Finnish officials were skeptical that the Uighers could be integrated successfully into Finnish society.

[1](#)4. (C) Poloff acknowledged the difficulties some groups might have in Finland, but urged the Finns to take a close look at the detainees, especially the Somali detainee Muhamed Hussein Abdullah. Finland has a Somali immigrant and refugee population of approximately 8000. Many of the Somalis have been in Finland since the late 1990s and have developed strong support networks. Abdullah might find ready support from Finland's Somali community, and Finnish social services are already geared toward provision of services to Somali-speaking refugees. Poloff also noted that after years of criticizing US policy on Guantanamo, it

seemed inconsistent for Finland to shut the door on detainee resettlement as the US actively looked for ways to reduce and eventually eliminate the detainee population.

15. (C) The Finns agreed to sound out senior officials on the possibility of admitting detainees (most probably Abdullah) to Finland. One complicating factor is that Finland had a general election in March and the new government will not be formed until mid-late April. Absent an UNHCR request, any decision to admit a refugee needs to be approved by Parliament and the Foreign Minister, with at least the acquiescence of the Prime Minister. Suurpaa was unsure if FM Tuomioja--who will only be FM for a few more weeks--would want to take up the issue in his last days in office. If not, the issue will have to wait until the new cabinet is in place.

16. (C) Action Request: The identifying information on Muhamed Hussein Abdullah in Ref B does not contain any information as to why he was detained; it gives his employment and academic history and then notes, without explanation, that he was detained in Peshawar in 2002. Finnish officials would like the following information on Abdullah to facilitate their decision-making:

-- Why was Abdullah detained? Why is he now considered safe for release?

-- Will Abdullah's wife and/or any of his 11 children also seek resettlement at the same time?

-- Should Finland consider the request, can Finnish officials visit and interview Abdullah before deciding to accept him?

Upon receipt, post will pass the answers to these questions to the MFA and monitor ongoing Finnish deliberations about the resettlement issue.

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